



THE UNITED LEADER

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Is Stelmach breaking his promise to seniors?

By cutting long term care beds instead of building them, Dennis Mol says Conservatives misled Albertans.

By Lou Arab



“So those patients will continue to occupy hospital beds, which will in turn continue to clog up our emergency rooms.”

Front line workers in the long term care sector decided to fight back against Stelmach’s broken promise. CUPE Local 8 launched a postcard campaign asking the Premier Ed Stelmach to build the 600 long term care spaces he pledged before the election.

Local 8 members, along with CUPE members across the province collected over 2,600 signed postcards from CUPE members, seniors, and members of the general public, angry that the Conservative government is cutting the number of long term care beds.

“Instead of building long term care beds like he promised, Premier Stelmach is forcing seniors into situations with higher costs and lower levels of care,” said Local 8 President Collette Singh.

“As the people who take care of seniors, we see the long wait lists that already exist,” said Singh. “Seniors are taking up valuable, and expensive, hospital beds because the Conservatives are not acting.”

“If he wants to show Albertans he cares, he can start by keeping his promise.”

The NDP caucus has pledged to table the postcards in the Legislature during the spring session of the assembly.

Ed Stelmach promised Alberta seniors they would be taken care of. Instead, he’s left them out in the cold. Is this what we want for our loved ones?

EDMONTON – During the last election, Ed Stelmach promised to build 600 new long term care spaces. To date none of them have been built.

The resulting shortage of space has meant seniors in need of long term, continuing health care, have been sitting in hospital beds at great expense to the taxpayer.

“All across the province, hospitals are caring for seniors and others who would be better off in a long term care setting,” said CUPE Alberta President Dennis Mol. “When you consider the fact that the hospitals cost the taxpayers so much more, it’s a mystery to me why they don’t build more residential beds.”

The Conservative promise for more long term care spaces was made in January 2008, about six weeks before a provincial election. Last September, Alberta NDP leader Brian Mason released leaked government documents indicating the Conservatives have given up that promise, and plan to focus on private sector assisted living spaces.

Mol says assisted living facilities are seniors’ homes with little or no medical care. And here’s the rub, since there is no medical care – the seniors have to pay the full bill. Assisted living facilities

are almost all operated by private industry with much higher fees and fewer regulations.

According to Mol, the increased emphasis on assisted living spaces will encourage

doctors to keep patients in hospitals even longer.

“No doctor or family member is going to put a senior into a facility where they don’t get the care they need,” said Mol.



Sending a message - CUPE Alberta President Dennis Mol (left) holds a press conference with National Representative Maxine Copeland, CUPE 1158 President Linda Joyce and Alberta NDP Leader Brian Mason. In front of them - over 2,600 postcards calling on Premier Ed Stelmach to keep his campaign promise to build 600 new long term care spaces

Paper or e-paper – which is greener?

At almost any CUPE convention, you will hear delegates grumbling about the amount of paper distributed to delegates. CUPE members, like all Canadians, don't want to waste paper needlessly.

Often those upset about the environmental impact of excess paper point to the electronic revolution as a way to reduce our environmental footprint. Delegates to conventions have suggested documents be distributed by giving all convention goers a computer flash key with all the documents saved, or simply put the documents up on a screen and let others pick up hard copies only if they want them.

Truth is the solution isn't so simple.

Paper is one of the easiest products to recycle. So the impact on our forests need not be significant, as long as recycled paper is used and put in the blue bin when we're done with it. Compare that to the impact of producing 250 flash keys for a typical CUPE Alberta convention – imagine how long it will take for that flash key to decompose in a land fill if not recycled. And while electronic waste is thought to account for only 2% of landfills in the US, it accounts for 70% of the heavy metals that come from those same dumping grounds.

While it takes energy to produce and re-cycle paper, the amount is negligible compared to the energy used to create electronic hardware to store the data. It takes 500 kilowatt hours of electricity to produce 440 pounds of paper – the typical amount of paper we each use in an average year. That's about the same amount used to operate a computer for only five months – and that doesn't include the energy used to manufacture the computer in the first place.

Even a simple Google search uses energy. According to one recent study, two Google searches use the same amount of energy as boiling a kettle of water. Google disputes that figure, saying each search is likely responsible for 0.2 g of carbon being released into the atmosphere. It should be noted however, that in Alberta, electricity is mostly generated from coal, which is among the dirtiest forms of power generation available, so whichever Google figure you believe, it's likely higher in the wild rose province.

So remember that while no one wants to use more trees than necessary, sometimes the solutions to environmental problems are decidedly low-tech. The bundle of paper you take home from conventions may be a pain to lug around, but it's likely a lot friendlier to the environment than your computer.



CUPE legal challenge, resolve solid as ever

By Loren Johnson

CUPE health care workers were shocked last March by an announcement from Labour Minister Hector Goudreau that all general support services employees of Alberta Health Services would be represented by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE). CUPE paramedics were told they would be moved into the Health Science Association of Alberta (HSAA). In the case of CUPE members from the old Chinook health region, the decision went against a 65% vote in favour of staying with their

union back in 2005.

Goudreau justified the decision by citing Bill 27, passed in 2003, also known as the 80/20 rule, which saw employees, moved to which ever union had 80% or more working for an employer.

General Service employees in the Chinook and Palliser health region, along with EMS workers from across the province are all affected.

In June, the Labour Relations Board granted a stay which allows those affected to remain in CUPE until a ruling is handed down regarding the constitutional challenge CUPE has put forward in protest to the undemocratic decision.

CUPE 408 President Carol Boklaschuk has shouldered this protest as a witness in hearings before the Labour Board and her resolve is as solid as ever. When asked how she felt personally about Goudreau's

announcement, she replied, "My CUPE family is being taken away from me. That announcement hit me like being told of a death in my family."

"We're not going to change the way we do our day to day business. It's not over until it's over; we're fighting until the end. I believe we have the right to choose. What I think is so wrong about this (decision) is that the government is trying to take away that right."

Literacy in the workplace

By Sam Basi and Chad Ennis

Joanna, Josef and Juan are CUPE members at an Alberta workplace.

Joanna is hearing about a new job at her workplace and she sees it's posted on the bulletin board. She's interested in the job but feels she doesn't have the skills to do the job. Nor can clearly understand the job posting and what it means.

Josef has been going to work for eighteen years and is considered a senior employee at his job site. He had a concern regarding his vacation pay and went to the Union Steward to ask questions. The Steward gave him a grievance form and told him what to write. The Steward noticed that Josef was having difficulty reading the form and writing a response. The Steward was surprised as he hadn't noticed that Josef had difficulties reading and writing. They had a discussion and Josef stated

he was feeling embarrassed to talk about his skills and didn't want others to know. The Steward encouraged him to participate in some workplace training and join with others in adult learning that the Union and Employer have agreed to provide for the workers. This training will give him confidence, improved skills, opportunities to apply for new jobs, the ability to read and understand health and safety issues, the ability to read and understand his workplace rights in his collective agreement, and overall, personal satisfaction that he has improved his reading, writing and comprehension skills.

Juan is a new Canadian who has lived in Alberta for over one year. He practices his English but feels more comfortable speaking Spanish. He is shy and doesn't want to mispronounce words. He doesn't understand the slang terms

that Albertans and Canadians speak. Juan has heard that there are courses offered called "ESL" and thinks it's about practicing and becoming more comfortable speaking English. He wants to attend this kind of workshop. He has no experience with unions but sees a poster on the union bulletin board that says the word "ESL".... He's curious and wants to learn more.

Joanna, Josef and Juan are three members of thousands of our co-workers who may have literacy challenges.

Sound familiar? If your local has literacy issues, contact your National Representative for information about CUPE literacy programs.

Retirement: The three pillars of your retirement wages

Your retirement nest egg, do you have enough?

Financial advisors recommend that when a person retires, for them to maintain the financial life style they are used to, they need approximately 70% of the wages they earned while working. If you are planning on extensive travel or golfing year-round, that 70% might not be enough. Alternatively, if you are planning on a quiet retirement or earning income from a "hobby job", 70% might do the trick. With this in mind, what is your income going to be when you retire?

Plan for your retirement, you worked for it and you deserve it.

(approximately \$17,061) of your pre-retirement wages, if you qualify for the maximum payable amount. The other 35% would have to be made up from your pension plan in order to give you a reasonable retirement wage. Based on \$45,000 per year salary, the Local Authorities Pension Plan would pay you approximately \$16,176 per year depending on your age and years of service or 36% of your pre-retirement wages. This would give you an annual income of \$33,237 per year, pre-tax.

There are three pillars (sources) of income when you retire. At age 65 a resident of Canada can make application for and receive Old Age Security Pension (OAS) and Canada Pension Plan (CPP) from the Federal Government. The other source is your workplace Pension Plan. These three pillars form the basis for your retirement income which can be enhanced by your savings or by RRSPs.

Therefore, depending on your life style, other savings may be part of your plans for retirement. To have a basic financial plan, start with a budget. In that budget, list your mandatory costs (utilities, mortgage, house repairs, vehicle payments, etc) and your non-mandatory costs (entertainment, travel, new purchases, etc). Once you have this basic information you can calculate what you are going to need financially to retire. There are a number of good financial advisors in Alberta that can help you to make your plan.

If your salary prior to retirement was \$45,000 per year, CPP & OAS would give you an income of approximately 37%



Did you know?

Did you know that according to the Alberta Federation of Labour there were 57,843 temporary foreign workers (TFW) in Alberta as of December 2008, and more than half of them were considered low-skilled. From 2006 to 2008 the number of TFWs in Alberta nearly doubled.

are told by an overseas recruiter that once they get here they will likely gain permanent residence, which most never do.

Did you know that TFWs send a portion of their wages home to family or extended families?

Did you know, given that a TFW can only work for the employer established at the time the permit is issued that employers can abuse the worker by not paying overtime,

Did you know TFWs often experience racism, threats of deportation and harassment by the employer?

altering wages and working conditions inappropriately, or violating other legislation such as Employment Standards or safety codes with little fear the worker will complain? Furthermore, many live in employer provided housing in sub-standard conditions paying excessive rents. Complaining about any of these conditions can lead to deportation.

Temporary foreign workers often experience racism, threats of deportation and harassment by the employer

Did you know TFWs have to fight for access to Employment Insurance even though they pay into it and are legally permitted to receive it?

Did you know that many of the TFW permits are no longer being renewed, leaving many TFW's sent back to their homeland without employment and with little opportunity, but a substantial debt may still be owed to the broker who arranged their job.

Did you know that TFWs often pay exorbitant and illegal fees to brokers for finding employment? They often arrive in Alberta and find that working conditions do not match the original agreement. They are permitted to work in Alberta for only two years and in spite of this most

TFWs looking to enhance their economic and social conditions by coming to Alberta often end up short of achieving their goal of a better life and experience exploitation, discrimination and financial insecurity.

Enter the CUPE Alberta photo contest



The CUPE Alberta photo contest is back! CUPE Alberta is again calling on members to get out their cameras and start shooting.

Prizes:

Grand Prize (best overall picture): \$500

First prize in each category: \$150

In an effort to document the life of CUPE in our job sites and communities, we are inviting all shutterbugs to send in pictures in the following categories:

Send your pictures to:

1. CUPE at work: pictures of CUPE members working at their jobsite.

Lou Arab,
Communications Representative

2. CUPE in the community: pictures of CUPE members in their community.

Email: larab@cupe.ca

3. The lighter side of CUPE: any funny picture that involves CUPE or a CUPE member in some way.

Mail to #410, 10525 170 St,
Edmonton, AB T5P 4W2

Deadline: March 1, 2010

Attention Young Workers!



By Scott Cush, CUPE Alberta Young Workers' VP

Not feeling the solidarity? Have to look up the word "solidarity"? When you think of unions do you think of picket lines? The learning curve can be quite steep for new union members. Fact is, most young workers won't step into a union hall until it's too late. Don't be that person!

Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of CUPE is important to knowing your next move. Knowing your issues help CUPE Alberta make our decisions. As a young worker myself, let me invite you to explore the questions that you might have been thinking. If you have issues I want to hear them. Connect with me, so I can help you connect why we do what we do.

Blog: <http://www.cupealberta.ab.ca/young-workers>

Twitter: [cupealberta](https://twitter.com/cupealberta)

Facebook Group: [CUPE Alberta](https://www.facebook.com/cupealberta)

Labour Board upholds the Rand formula



The Alberta Labour Relations Board has declared Alberta's Labour Code unconstitutional.

In its November decision, the board found that the Code's failure to institute what is commonly known as the 'Rand Formula' infringed on unions ability to engage in collective bargaining. The 'Rand Formula' is the rule that states all employees in a unionized workforce must pay union dues, whether they belong to the union or not. Unions, in turn, must

represent all employees regardless of their membership status.

The Labour Board was ruling on the bargaining position taken by Old Dutch Foods in its current lockout with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. The employees have been locked out since March 29, 2009. Prior to the decision, Old Dutch refused to implement the Rand formula. As of press time, bargaining has resumed following the LRB decision.

Justice Ivan Rand, while working as an arbitrator in a 1945 Ford Labour dispute, developed the 'Rand Formula,' which gave unions the security they needed to fight for better wages and working conditions.

Foothills School Division joins CUPE family

CALGARY -- Almost 180 school support workers at Foothills School Division will merge their staff association into the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

The employees, including educational assistants, clerical, technical and library staff, sought to join CUPE feeling their

employer did not respect their association or their collective agreement. The members voted 66% in favour of the merger.

The employees join 7,500 other CUPE members from the K-12 sector in Alberta. CUPE represents more school district employees in the province than any other union.

CUPE 2144 at work in the community



Geraldine Olynyk, Executive Director of Lloydminster and Area Brain Injury Society (LABIS) receives a cheque for \$100.00 from Brenda Finley, President, CUPE 2114, representing employees of Lloydminster Public Library and Pioneer Lodge, on Thursday, October 15, at Lloydminster Public Library. LABIS is a non-profit, charitable organization which provides programming support, and resource sharing for brain injured persons and their families.

The United Leader

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